THE RAGTIMER

MAY/JUNE 1975

PUBLISHED BY
THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

NOTICE OF ADDITION TO CATALOGUE

The following is now added to page 6 of our 1975 Catalogue under the listing of Commercially Published Sheet Music:

CM-644 Crab Apples Two Step (Wenrich) 1908
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JAZZOLOGY - $6. 00 each

JCE-71 Ragtime: A New View - played by Donald Ashwander
12 modern rags.

FOUNDED 1962
INCORPORATED 1970

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

is a non - profit corporation having the following objects:

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

PLAN YOUR
SUMMER
WITH A HAPPY
ENDING!

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
ANNUAL BASH
AT TORONTO
ON THE WEEKEND OF
OCTOBER 18, 1975.

RAGTIME...
UNDER YOUR HAT

The 11th Annual Bash of THE RAGTIME SOCIETY will be held on the weekend of Saturday, October 18, 1975 at the Cara Inn. Registration particulars will be attached to the next issue of THE RAGTIMER (JULY/AUGUST). If you plan to attend please act promptly thereafter in sending in the registration requirements. The procedure of last year will be repeated. The first come, first served principle will apply except that we will endeavour to protect members up to a cut-off date to be announced. Guests of members will continue to be welcome. Again it is the friendly warning that you should firm up your plans in time to avoid disappointment. We were oversubscribed last year - it can happen again.

We wish you a happy summer season. The lazy pleasant days of summer provide a genuine excuse for slowing down the pace. Even though you relax, keep an ear open for the open-air concert sounds of ragtime riding along on the evening breeze.

Fans of our own JOHN ARPIN will be delighted to learn that his performances at The Prince Hotel have become more accessible. Early in May, John and his group moved from the hotel's Le Continental dining room to the ROYAL BOX LOUNGE where dining requirements have been discontinued. John is always pleased when his ragtime friends are in the audience.

Another of our members, TOM NOEL, is on the move concerning the acting side of his career. He is now in rehearsal for the new Tennessee Williams play, THE RED DEVIL BATTERY SIGN, with Anthony Quinn,

(continued on page 4)

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Claire Bloom and Katy Jurado. The tryouts begin at the Shubert Theatre in Boston for 2 weeks on June 13th followed by 5 weeks at the National in Washington. An early Broadway opening at the Shubert Theatre is set for August 12th. We are excited for Tom who says, "Tennessee Williams' play promises a 'big hit' - we have an excellent Mariachi Band in the show and a good bit of fine music."

Good news come from Michigan concerning member BOB SEELEY. Following the disasterous fire at Charlie's Crab Restaurant & Lounge, Bob is now re-established in residence at a new location for six nights per week. Michigan members and visitors can again hear the Boogie/Stride/Ragtime virtuosity of this outstanding pianist at OLD MILL Restaurant, 5838 Dixie Highway, Waterford (on U. S. 10 about 20 miles northwest of Detroit). We send Bob our best wishes.

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EUBIE BLAKE

By Idamay MacInnes

It keeps us busy trying to keep up with all the activities of our dear 92-year old EUBIE BLAKE. He was in California for the month of April and appeared again on The Johnny Carson Show. It was great to see Johnny break up over Eubie and his great sense of humour. His playing was really great!

Eubie had another honour conferred upon him in Baltimore, Md., where he appeared on May 16 & 17th. The concerts were called "A Tribute to Baltimore's Own Eubie Blake", and were held at the Morris Mechanic Theatre.

This was during the week of the 100th running of the Preakness at Pimlico, Md. on May 16th. Eubie was taken out to Pimlico to witness a special race called "The Eubie Blake Purse", run in his honour.

Looking ahead, we know of two important playing dates --- Eubie will be appearing at the Newport Jazz Festival on July 1st at Carnegie Hall in New York --- and between July 17th and 24th Eubie will be appearing again at the Jazz Festival in Nice, France.

As well as the above-mentioned activities we are sure that Eubie is keeping himself, and his lovely wife Marion, very busy with concerts - T. V. shows - and all the other things that happen to such a great performer and a grand person.

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EUBIE BLAKE AND ARTUR RUBENSTEIN COMPARE AGES

Early last February, Artur Rubenstein gave his only concert performance at New York, during his schedule for the season. Eubie was in attendance and at the conclusion went backstage to greet the artist.

"Oh, I'm glad to meet you," Rubenstein said. "I hear you're a marvellous pianist."

Eubie told Rubenstein, "After tonight I'm not so sure." Eubie then added that he would be 92 in four more days (February 7, 1975).

Rubenstein had turned 88 the previous week. He pondered their ages for a moment and then commented, "Why, allowing for inflation, we are both 125."

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RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Nonesuch H-71305 'Piano Rags By Scott Joplin, Volume III', piano solos by Joshua Rifkin.

Selections: Original Rags, Weeping Willow, The Cascades, The Chrysanthemum, Sugar Cane, The Nonpareil, Country Club, Stoptime Rag.

Joshua Rifkin's third LP of Joplin material, though still well recorded, precisely played, and offered at a budget price, hits the mark only about half the time and thus falls below the standard set by his first two. "The Cascades" is bright but not rushed, Rifkin bringing off the difficult trio flawlessly and the whole track with spirit; "Sugar Cane" is also a robust performance, while the foot-stamping on "Stoptime" never fails to create infectious good cheer; and Rifkin's sympathetic reading of "The Chrysanthemum" spotlights the piece's reflective nature without injecting the excessive moodiness sometimes found in other renditions. Offset against these numbers are a labored "Weeping Willow", a much-too-gentle "The Nonpareil", and a version of "Country Club" that takes to a ridiculous extreme Joplin's constant exhortations not to play fast -- the latter two efforts departing from Rifkin's customary adherence to the published scores in favour of pointless, self-consciously cute fills and runs. This one's for the ragtimers who have already flipped over Rifkin.

* * *

Folkways RBF 25 'Toe Tappin' Ragtime'

Selections and Artists: Maple Leaf Rag-Herb Wiedoft; Tenth Interval Rag-Gene Rodemich; Pianoflage-Fate Marable; Springtime Rag-Vic Meyers; Pork and Beans-Earl Fuller; Gloria-Vincent Lopez; Cannon Ball Rag-Guy Lombardo; Ginger Snaps-Rosario Bourdon; Dog On The Piano-Eddie Ward; Lolly Pops-Harry Reser; Cataract Rag Blues-Hitch's Happy Harmonists; Carolina Shout-Jimmy Johnson; Goofy Dust-Bennie Moten; The Arm Breaker-Clarence Jones; Hobson Street Blues-Bob Zurke.

An LP of rags and ragtime-flavored tunes played by dance bands of the 1920's is naturally going to contain a lot of dance music, but a half-dozen or so tracks feature the band pianists and an accomplished lot they turn out to be. Zurke and Moten live up to their reputations with some steaming stride work, while the more obscure Rodemich and Jones handle tricky novelty ragtime so well that you'll wish you could hear more. The rest of the LP ranges

from fun-but-trivial nostalgia (Wiedoft's vo-do-de-o stuff, complete with doo-wah mutes and slap-tongue reeds) to red-hot jazz (the unbelievably cooking Lombardo track has long been one of my favorite blindfold tests for visiting jazzers). A satisfactory survey of this highly specialized field, probably of borderline interest to all but the insatiable historians in the Ragtime Society.

* * *

Vanguard VSD 79346 'Irving Berlin: The Ragtime Years', by Max Morath, vocals, with orchestra arranged and conducted by Manny Alabam.

Selections: Everything In America Is Ragtime, Everybody Step, All Alone, Blue Skies, The Grizzly Bear, They Were All Out Of Step But Jim, The International Rag, The Circus Is Coming To Town, Crinoline Days, Let Me Sing And I'm Happy, Mr. Jazz Himself, When The Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves For Alabam'.

As usual, the incomparable Max Morath has unearthed some undeservedly neglected songs to include in this collection along with more famous material from Berlin's early years as a composer. "Everybody Step" is just terrific, featuring an intricate but easy-swinging syncopated melody; "They Were All Out Of Step But Jim" brilliantly combines sentiment, patriotism, parental pride and good humor into a stirring 6/8 march; and "Let Me Sing And I'm Happy" captures, in 32 gentle, heart-on-the-sleeve bars, the dream of every song-and-dance man worth his salt. Less than half the titles can, strictly speaking, be called ragtime songs ("The Grizzly Bear" -- Berlin's lyric to George Botsford's rag -- being especially zestful), running time is woefully brief (the entire album could almost be pressed onto one side), and Max's vocalizing is occasionally submerged by overblown orchestral arrangements. Despite these negatives, Max comes through personally with characteristic style and professionalism, his output continuing to be unique and of special interest to ragophiles.

* * *

Yazoo L-1045 'String Ragtime: To Do This You Got To Know How'

Selections and Artists: Sweet Georgia Brown-Jim & Bob; Somethin' Doin'-Nap Hayes & Matthew Prater; Arizona Stomp-East Texas Serenaders; Banjo Rag-Chauncey C. Lee; Spaghetti Rag-Robert Maxwell; Cotton Patch Rag-John Dilleshaw; To Do This You Got To Know How-Lonnie Johnson; Mandolin Blues, Russian Rag-Dave Apollon; E Rag-Walker's Corbin Ramblers; Banjo Rag-Harold Goodman; Persian Lamb Rag-Bob Roberts; State St. Rag-Louie Bluie & Ted Bogan; Dallas Rag-Dallas String Band.

This is really more an LP of peppy country music than anything else, presenting very little to attract listeners exclusively interested in ragtime (in the sense in which our readers usually understand the term). "Spaghetti Rag", however, a strutting harp solo (really!) accompanied by tuba, banjo and drums, is a complete gas, offering a sound like nothing you've ever heard. A few other tracks contain snatches of ragtime, competent enough but nothing special, except, possibly, for Lee's fast, punchy banjo-picking. Start with this type of musical program, subtract something for the puerile claptrap masquerading as liner notes and for the lack of discographical data (Yazoo is predominantly a reissue label, and these are presumably reissues), and what's left for the ragtimers in the crowd?

* * *

77 SEU 12/51 'Walkin' With Wellstood', piano solos by Dick Wellstood.

Selections: Russian Lullaby, Old Fashioned Love, Rubber Duck, After You've Gone, Walkin' With Watney's, If Dreams Come True, So In Love, Miss Otis Regrets, American Beauty, Ellington Medley (Prelude To A Kiss, Sophisticated Lady, Caravan), Chantez Les Bas.

About half the solos on this LP are jazz performances, and fine ones too, in an earthy, medium-or-slow vein, presenting fresh ideas, expressed with logic and economy, within a traditional framework. The other half, supporting a review in a column devoted to ragtime, embrace hard-hitting Harlem-stride playing of an all-around excellence that is virtually beyond hope of description. Not a recording for the ragtime purists, maybe, (Dick's propulsive ride on Lamb's "American Beauty" -- the only "rag" on the bill -- is anything but the stately classic piece represented by the published score) but certainly for devotees of two-handed piano with direct roots back to Fats and James P. Accuracy, inspiration, heat, you name it -- as we've said before with respect to some of his albums with a richer ragtime content, Wellstood does it all; if you haven't heard him yet, you're really missing something.

* * *

Radio Canada International stereo 380 'Lou Hooper, piano'

Selections: Blame It On The Blues, In A Mist, Canadian Capers, South Sea Strut, Russian Rag, Scene From An Imaginary Ballet (Sc. 4), Scene From An Imaginary Ballet (Sc. 2), Black Cat Blues, Spring Fever, Cakewalk, Alaskan Rag, Uncle Remus Stomp.

Society members will especially welcome this album, as it includes several numbers Lou played for delighted audiences during his appearances at the annual Bash. His playing is clean, steady, tasteful and lightly rhythmic, reflecting his classical training in Detroit prior to his appearance on the New York jazz scene in the 1920's. The well-balanced program ranges through light classics ("Ballet"), middle-of-the-road ragtime ("Blame", "Russian", "Alaskan"), novelty rag ("Capers", "Fever") and four rag-tinged Hooper originals (the piano-rollish "Black Cat" and the bright-stepping "Cakewalk" -- really a novelty rag despite its title -- being particularly fine works) with an impressive agility that belies Lou's age (78) on the recording date. Like Lou himself, his music is gentlemanly and winning, with special appeal, perhaps, to more academically-minded ragtimers.

* * *

Dirty Shame 1237 'Snookums Rag', piano solos by Terry Waldo.

Selections: Pastime Rag #1, Pastime Rag #2, Pastime Rag #3, Pastime Rag #4, Pastime Rag #5, Snookums Rag, The Pearls, Yellow Rose Rag, Chinatown Rag, A Black Smoke, Spanish Venus.

Available from: Dirty Shame Records, Box 5217 Hanegan Station, St. Louis, Missouri 63139.

Crisp, outgoing ragtime mounted on an irresistible, foot-tapping rhythm, and if you don't like it, you're reading the wrong magazine. Terry generally follows the scores, but he's so comfortable with the material that you get no inkling at all of such formalities as

music stands and printed arrangements. The Waldo version of the "Pastimes", the third collection to hit the recent market, has its own distinctive virtues, being faithful enough to Matthews to satisfy all but the fussiest, yet with that back-roomy flavor that puts flesh onto the bones of the manuscript. The rest of this recommended album consists mostly of hitherto-unrevived rags, Charles L. Johnson's down-homey "A Black Smoke" being of exceptional merit, plus a raggedy Waldo original, "Yellow Rose Rag". Yes!

* * *

Columbia M33205 "Scott Joplin, Volume II", solos by E. Power Biggs on pedal harpsichord.

Selections: The Cascades, The Chrysanthemum, Something Doing, Magnetic Rag, Felicity Rag, The Entertainer, Paragon Rag, Sugar Cane, Scott Joplin's New Rag, Great Crush Collision March.

The relentless optimism inherent in Biggs' choice of brisk, no-nonsense tempos combines effectively withthe carousel-like sound of the pedal harpsichord, generally serving the music well and creating a mood of flamboyant good cheer. Moreover, Biggs makes intelligent use of his instrument's resources (different registers, damped vs. sustained notes) to introduce variety into the performances and develop the ideas of Joplin's themes while still staying within the published manuscripts. "Crush Collision", for example, works its descriptive passages to the hilt, vividly and lustily bringing the disaster to life; "Sugar Cane" offers a comfortably swinging, outdoorsy pulse that evokes the rural image implied by the title; and the very rapid, but strictly controlled, pace of "Something Doing" puts a wallop into one of Joplin's lesser rags. There are weak spots -- "Cascades" is way too fast, "Magnetic" ponderous and boring, and "Felicity" gets pretty noisy as Biggs steers his machinery through the thickly-scored passages -- which prevent an unqualified recommendation, but the LP delivers adequate value for the price.

* * *

Jazzology JCE-77 "The Cascades", piano solos by Mike Polad.

Selections: Sneaky Shuffles, Eugenia, It Certainly Is, Cottontail Rag, American Beauty Rag, The Cascades, Bethena, Red Pepper, Fizz Water.

Available @ $5.98 from: Jazzology Records, 3008 Wadsworth Mill Place, Decatur, Georgia 30032.

Nine rags -- a somewhat small measure for an LP, but including some goodies that haven't been overly recorded yet -- executed cleanly according to the manuscripts. The program starts off on its left foot -- Lodge's "Sneaky Shuffles" is too thinly scored to work at Polad's deliberate gait, while "Eugenia", with more depth, is still handled too delicately and doesn't sufficiently involve the listener -- but things freshen up with Polad's more lively "It Certainly Is" (although certain passages still sound like they ought to be faster) and from there on out the LP is quite satisfying. Polad's version of "Bethena", in my view a pretentious and overrated work, is about the best I've heard, moving brightly through sections that other performers wring dry of brooding emotionalism; in Polad's hands, "Bethena" is both interesting and enjoyable. Capable technique is displayed on some toughies ("Cascades" strutting right along right through the intricate trio), a firm grasp of the idiom is at work to get the most out of the arrangements (Lodge's "Red Pepper" is swinging and

raggedy, with the music box effect of playing the second strain repeat an octave higher being an inspired touch) and on balance, the good things in the album outweigh the weak spots.

* * *

Klavier KS-124 "George Gershwin Plays", piano rolls hand-played (sometimes enhanced with extra notes or assisted by another pianist) by George Gershwin.

Selections: Rhapsody In Blue, Swanee, That Certain Feeling, For Your Country And My Country, Make Believe, Some Sunday Morning, Land Where The Good Songs Go, Grieving For You, Ain't You Coming Back To Dixie.

Available from: Klavier Records, 5652 Willowcrest Avenue, North Hollywood, California 91601.

We close out today's column with a gem for the piano roll buffs among our readers, the presence and fidelity of these recordings of rolls, played on a Steinway Duo-Art reproducing piano, being everything you could wish for. "Rhapsody In Blue", a thirteen-minute-plus roll that occupies all of Side One, won't interest the ragtimers much, though it's practically indispensable for pianists who are fighting their way through the published solo version. But Side Two, with that **tre**mendous bouyancy and momentum of player-piano rhythm; the rich, fertile lines of Gershwin's imaginative arrangements; a list of dandy-but-forgotten pop tunes; and Gershwin's dazzling novelty-rag-tinged technique, simply bursts with contagious high spirit. Breathes there a ragophile with soul so dead as to feel otherwise after hearing the album?

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SCOTT JOPLIN REDISCOVERED - PART 8

Many references have appeared in the press concerning Scott Joplin's opera "TREEMONISHA". The majority of our members are not likely to be in possession of a copy of the opera. For their reading interest and particularly as a matter of general record we are pleased to present the story outline, cast of characters, and contents of the opera as written and copyrighted in 1911 by Scott Joplin in his own words:

"

TREEMONISHA
Opera in Three Acts
Words And Music By
SCOTT JOPLIN
(Story Fictitious)

Act I - Morning. Act II - Afternoon. Act III - Evening.

Preface

The Scene of the Opera is laid on a plantation somewhere in the State of Arkansas, Northeast of the Town of Texarkana and three or four miles from the Red River. The plantation being surrounded by a dense forest.

There were several negro families living on the plantation and other families back in the woods.

In order that the reader may better comprehend the story, I will give a few details regarding the Negroes of this plantation from the year 1866 to the year 1884.

The year 1866 finds them in dense ignorance, with no-one to guide them, as the white folks had moved away shortly after the Negroes were set free and had left the plantation in charge of a trustworthy negro servant named Ned.

All of the Negroes, but Ned and his wife Monisha, were superstitious, and believed in conjuring. Monisha, being a woman, was at times impressed by what the more expert conjurers would say.

Ned and Monisha had no children, and they had often prayed that their cabin home might one day be brightened by a child that would be a companion for Monisha when Ned was away from home. They had dreams, too, of educating the child so that when it grew up it could teach the people around them to aspire to something better and higher than superstition and conjuring.

The prayers of Ned and Monisha were answered in a remarkable manner. One morning in the middle of September 1866, Monisha found ababy under a tree that grew in front of her cabin. It proved to be a light-brown-skinned girl about two days old. Monisha took the baby into the cabin, and Ned and she adopted it as their own.

They wanted the child, while growing up, to love them as it would have loved its real parents, so they decided to keep it in ignorance of the manner in which it came to them until old enough to understand. They realized, too, that if the neighbors knew the facts, they would some day tell the child, so, to deceive them, Ned hitched up his mules and, with Monisha and the child, drove over to a family of old friends who lived twenty miles away and whom they had not seen for three years. They told their friends that the child was just a week old.

Ned gave these people six bushels of corn and forty pounds of meat to allow Monisha and the child to stay with them for eight weeks, which Ned thought would benefit the health of Monisha. The friends willingly consented to have her stay with them for that length of time.

Ned went back alone to the plantation and told his old neighbors that Monisha, while visiting some old friends, had become mother of a girl baby.

The neighbors were, of course, greatly surprised, but were compelled to believe that Ned's story was true.

At the end of the eight weeks Ned took Monisha and the child home and received the congratulations of his neighbors and friends and was delighted to find that his scheme had worked so well.

Monisha, at first, gave the child her own name; but, when the child was three years old, she was so fond of playing under the tree where she was found that Monisha gave her the name of Tree-Monisha.

When Treemonisha was seven years old Monisha arranged with a white family that she would do their washing and ironing and Ned would chop their wood if the lady of the house would give Treemonisha an education, the schoolhouse being too far away for the child to attend. The lady consented and as a result Treemonisha was the only educated person in the neighborhood, the other children being still in ignorance on account of their inability to travel so far to school.

Zodzetrick, Luddud and Simon, three very old men, earned their living by going about the neighborhood practicing conjuring, selling little luck-bags and rabbits' feet, and confirming the people in their superstition.

The opera begins in September 1884. Treemonisha, being eighteen years old, now starts upon her career as a teacher and leader.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

TREEMONISHA (Ned's adopted daughter)	Soprano.	CEPHUS	Tenor.
MONISHA (Ned's wife)	Soprano.	ZODZETRICK	High Baritone.
LUCY	Soprano.	NED	Bass.
REMUS	Tenor.	LUDDUD	Bass.
ANDY	Tenor.	SIMON	Bass.
PARSON ALLTALK			Bass.
CHORUS			

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2. The Bag of Luck	12. Treemonisha in Peril	20. I want to see my child
3. The Corn - Huskers	13. Frolic of the Bears	21. Treemonisha's Return
4. We're Goin' Around	14. The Wasp Nest	22. Wrong is Never Right
5. The Wreath	15. The Rescue	23. Abuse
6. The Sacred Tree	16. We Will Rest Awhile	24. When Villains Ramble Far and Near
7. Surprised	17. Going Home	25. Conjuror's Forgiven
8. Treemonisha's Bringing Up	18. Aunt Dinah has Blowed de Horn	26. We will Trust You as our Leader
9. Good Advice		27. A Real Slow Drag
10. Confusion		

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JERRY WHITE

1935 - 1971

A TRIBUTE TO A RAGTIMER

(Ed. Comment: Here is the story of a young man who was on the way to becoming a ragtimer hero of all those who struggle to master the art of ragtime, with natural talent but without formal training. The late Jerry White was a self-taught pianist. He developed an amazingly large repertoire. He could play the piano with incredible speed and dexterity. In listening to his recordings, the unusual is immediately detected. Whereas one would expect speed to lead into jumbled slurring, Jerry's dexterity retains a startling clarity in his blazing solo renditions. It is that ability which forms part of the skills he possessed. One of his recordings is actually descriptive by title - "White Lightning". But when the mood of a

JERRY WHITE

composition demanded otherwise, Jerry could still render the slow rolling ragtime so natural to the honky-tonk tinny sounds of an old saloon upright. Incidentally, if you are interested in having an example of Jerry's work, one of his records is still available (See Capsule Information releases.).

The sad note to this developing career, not yet expanded into the about-to-start classic ragtime of the Scott Joplin revival period, was the untimely death of Jerry White on February 6, 1971 at the early age of 35. Apparently suffering from mental depression, he

brought his own life to an end. It was a tragedy to all who knew him and particularly to his brother Howard White. Howard is also a ragtime pianist and a member of our Society. Howard was an ardent admirer of Jerry White first as a brother he loved, and secondly for the professional accomplishments which ended so abruptly. A feeling for Howard's devotion to remembering his late brother is found in his own short article which follows.)

FEBRUARY 6TH MARKED THE 4TH ANNIVERSARY OF JERRY WHITE'S PASSING

His presence is missed by all those who knew him as a person and as a gifted piano entertainer.

Jerry's piano artistry was a main attraction in Washington, D. C. between 1959 and 1971. He was well known by the ragtime patrons in the Washington, D. C. area and by the frequent visitors from all parts of the country. His unbelievable keyboard dexterity and rhythmic style kept Jerry steadily employed at Bassin's L'Escapade Room for twelve years.

In addition to his ability to get the patrons to join the community singing, Jerry always astounded onlookers with his showmanship. His best feature for dramatic display (complete with gloved hands and blindfolded) was his ability to play presto arrangements with the keyboard covered by a red-checked tablecloth.

Even though Jerry's presence is missed by those who knew him, his memory and recorded music lives on.

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TONY JACKSON TOOK CHARGE WHEN HE PLAYED RAGTIME

(Ed. Comment: We are indebted to Al Mancini of Penfield, New York, for information about Tony Jackson contained in an article by Kay C. Thompson published in The Record Changer, February, 1951. Too little is known about Tony Jackson, but the legend that he was the best of the early New Orleans ragtime pianists gains further credence by the comments of an on-the-spot observer who had pride in her own profession. The following are excerpts from the article.)

THE FIRST LADY OF STORYVILLE

- the fabulous COUNTESS WILLIE PIAZZA

Some time ago, it occurred to me that it might be edifying to secure the reminiscences of Countess Willie Piazza, in her day Storyville's most celebrated madam. I was intrigued by the fact that she had been described as the first to present a new form of music - jazz - in the parlor of her New Orleans bordello.

Locating this enterprising ex-bawd proved to be no easy task. She had been dead and buried several times, and in the beginning, I must admit that I was distinctly pessimistic about my prospects. In emulation of Chicago's notorious Everleigh Sisters, who quietly retired to New York in 1911 with more than a million dollars, the Countess had simply disappeared to take up life in new surroundings. This being so, I am not at liberty to divulge

her present whereabouts or identity, except to say that she is the respected and wealthy widow of a former Texas oil-man, whose fortune flowed from wild-cat wells. An attractive, white-haired old lady of nearly 80, she answered my questions with exceptional frankness, once I convinced her that I was not a social worker in search of a thesis, or a pious do-gooder bent on solving insolubles.

I turned the conversation in other directions, inquiring whether the Countess agreed with the view that jazz was music of sinful origins.

"Where jazz came from, I can't rightly say," she observed, "But I will tell you this much. I was the first one in New Orleans to employ a jazz pianist in the red-light district. Originally, I was somewhat loath to do so, fearing it would lower the tone and dignity that I wished to maintain. In those days, jazz was associated principally with dance halls and cabarets, and no doubt, some people probably thought that I was crazy. I do know, when I discussed the matter with Josie Arlington, she said she would never allow jazz in her place. But you know how it is. Once I broke the ice, the others followed suit. Of course, you realize that only the very best places could afford to add music, so I don't suppose that any more than a half dozen houses hired pianists; that is, at any one time.

"As a rule, the pianist generally worked for tips. In those days, there were no unions. As for anyone making a hundred dollars a night playing jazz piano, I'd say that it was most unlikely. My best girls didn't make that kind of money. If they had, I would have been the first to hear about it. But getting back to the subject of music, the idea of incidental music was nothing new. Before I introduced jazz, we had used light classics for years. Good music, along with fine furniture, oil paintings, silk sheets, and soft beds, lent a refined atmosphere. If you wished, you might put it this way. Jazz didn't start in sporting-houses. It merely wound up there. It was what most of our customers wanted to hear, though in those days they didn't call it jazz. They all called it ragtime."

When the Countess had disposed of this matter, I asked whether she had any concrete recollections of early New Orleans pioneers, Armstrong, Bechet, or the Dodds brothers, for instance?

"Well," she answered, "as you can imagine, I was often busy, and since we hired only pianists, I'm afraid I didn't get to know many jazz musicians. In fact, I don't think I ever heard Louis Armstrong until some years after I retired. That was in Chicago in the 1920s. But I do remember Tony Jackson. At that time, he was the finest player in town. He worked in and around the district for some years. Later, when he became better known, he preferred to play elsewhere - other jobs paid better money. Jelly Roll Morton? The name sounds familiar, but I don't recall him personally."

"During the period I am talking about, a place such as ours had no closing hour. But when things were slow, various pianists, who had worked for us at different times, would drop in after work, and we would enjoy a veritable festival of ragtime. In those days, the stores carried all the latest sheet music; they sent up North for it, to St. Louis, Kansas City, or wherever else it was published. That way, we got to hear the newest numbers."

"On such occasions, if Tony Jackson was present, he would literally take over, and there was one customer who could never get his fill of Tony. He was a minister, and a talented performer in his own right. In fact, I understand that he sometimes played for church dances. But when Sunday rolled around, he was dedicated to denouncing Sin, and once, when he had prepared an especially rousing sermon, demanding that Storyville be padlocked, I went to hear him. I sat right up front, across the aisle from his spouse, and when he reached the middle of his oration, I lifted my veil, just long enough to wink!"

Did the ragtime minister's message have any connection with Secretary Daniels' dim-out order?

"None whatever," the Countess replied. "His sermon was merely one of many, and it occurred quite early in my career. As for Secretary Daniels, I would say that his action had little bearing on the main course of events."

"But as far as Storyville goes, I had sold out prior to 1917, and when the district was finally abolished, my connection was just a nominal one. Consequently, when my famous white piano went at auction for something like a dollar and a quarter, there were no regrets. After all, in a manner of speaking, I had been taking 'depreciation' on it for longer than the allotted number of years."

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THE DETROIT SCENE

Many of our Detroit members are also Jazz Buffs. We hear regularly of their activities through the Gowers (Walt and Kerry Price), Mike Montgomery, Jim Taylor and others. Jim sent us particulars as follows:

THE DETROIT HOT JAZZ SOCIETY

The Detroit Hot Jazz Society has been formed to promote the enjoyment of live traditional jazz music in the Detroit area. We feel there is sufficient interest in Detroit to support a regular series of concerts at which both local and out-of-state musicians and jazz bands will perform. Between concerts, we'll tell you what else is happening at various clubs and restaurants in town. Our aim is to provide the best available talent to you at the lowest possible cost. An organization which will coordinate this activity can make this a reality. It's that simple!

Your membership fee of $10 per year will cover the cost of mailing you monthly bulletins listing current and future appearances of artists in our area. The bulletin can also be a vehicle to answer your questions and air your gripes and suggestions. We expect to notify you of new jazz records as they are issued, and as a member, you'll be able to get the records you want easily and at low cost. Naturally, the bulletin will give you advance notice of DHJS concerts.

Admission prices to the concerts will vary according to the talent cost and the amount in the Society treasury. But if the concerts are well received, it should be possible to stage occasional free concerts (open to members and guests only!).

If you like what we've promised so far, please mail your check, to: Jim Taylor, c/o Detroit Hot Jazz Society, 12311 Gratiot, Detroit, Michigan 48205.

MOTHER'S BOYS & KERRY PRICE TO REPRESENT DETROIT AT THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OF JAZZ AUGUST 1, 2 & 3, IN INDIANAPOLIS

The group consisting of Walt Gower, Paul Klinger, John Teachout, Rod MacDonald, J. R. Smith, Ed. Metz and Kerry Price, hopes their friends will be present. Since they will play at the Bix Festival in Davenport, Iowa the previous week, they expect to be all warmed

up for the competition. They are being sponsored by the DHJS. If you want to get in on the bus ride arrangements get in touch with Jim Taylor, c/o DHJS for further information.

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SEDALIA PLANS SECOND SCOTT JOPLIN RAGTIME FESTIVAL

We hear that plans are well advanced for another Ragtime Festival to be held during the latter half of July this year at Sedalia, Missouri. The citizens of that community are ready to build on the success of last year's event. For specific details, enquiries should be sent to Larry C. Melton, The Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival, Inc., P. O. Box 967, Sedalia, Missouri 65301, U. S. A. Bill Zinn's agent Lyra Management, Inc. of New York advises us that Bill and his Ragtime String Quartet is scheduled to appear at the Festival.

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BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB PLACES MAX MORATH PLAYS THE BEST OF SCOTT JOPLIN AT THE HEAD OF THE LIST

Ragtimers will be impressed with the importance given to ragtime. In a recent list of 45 outstanding stereo albums offered as book-dividends by the Book-Of-The-Month Club the listing began with the two-record Vanguard recordings "Max Morath plays the Best of Scott Joplin and other rag classics. Then followed recordings covering the works of such eminent composers as Beethoven, Chopin, Handel, Mozart through to such modern composers as George Gershwin and Cole Porter. Classical Ragtime has once more gained the recognition it deserves.

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Letters are welcome from members. Excerpts believed to be of general interest are passed along in this section of THE RAGTIMER.

Played a concert in Washington, D. C. on March 15 for the Potomac River Jazz Club with the Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Band, and that was, as always, a lot of fun. Indications

are that the BBMJB will again journey to Davenport, Iowa for the Bix jazz festival the last weekend in July.

Tex Wyndham, Mendenhall, Penn., U. S. A.

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Have you ever had any compositions by John Lind? He lived in Cincinnati, Ohio and published his own compositions. Some excerpts are on back of the one piece I have which I think is an extra good march two-step. It was written in 1910 and dedicated to the president of the Cincinnati Reds Baseball Club. Some of his other compositions are:

North Pole
Clover Leaf
The American Derby
The Telephone

The piece I have is PLAY BALL. Very attractive bright red and white cover. I am so excited about this composition I feel that any publishers who would promote it would make plenty. If the present owner of the Cincinnati Baseball Club could be sold on idea of selling it at the games it would sell.

Athelyn Truman, Lutsen, Minn., U. S. A.

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(Ed. Comment: A Scott Joplin Concert was performed on February 9, 1975 at Mankato State College in Minnesota. Member Lowell Schreyer played banjo in the orchestra and in addition was soloist for Scott Joplin's Original Rags.) In his letter he states:

It featured the Mankato State College Ragtime Orchestra, 13 pieces, on Red Back Book arrangements and also included soloists on vocals, piano and banjo. One portion of the program was devoted to "Treemonisha" excerpts. The concert was directed by James Wheeler, graduate music student, who received permission from the college music department to do this as one of his projects for his master's degree work. It was attended by an overflow crowd who gave the group a standing ovation at the close.

Lowell Schreyer, Mankato, Minn., U. S. A.

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James Messina
12000 S. W. 176th Street
Miami, Fla. 33177

Would enjoy meeting or writing to any members in area or visiting Miami.

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Mrs. Burke Murdock
303 Riverside Drive
Highlands, Texas 77562

Carlton Baxter
1133 Clinton Avenue South
Rochester, N. Y. 14620

Both would like copies of photos of Scott Joplin, Joseph Lamb, James Scott, Jelly Roll Morton, Eubie Blake, etc. Perhaps there are members who have some of these and would like to share with the above. Contact them directly.

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CAPSULE
INFORMATION
RELEASES ---------- FOR HAPPY HUNTING

NOTE: We often receive information from members and other sources which can be passed along in brief form as items of possible general interest. CAPSULE INFORMATION RELEASES do not refer to items or material which can be obtained from the SOCIETY. Further, we do not guarantee the accuracy of the information given. Under the conditions stated, we are able to publicize a broader coverage of promising information coming to our attention.

LP Record - DOWNTOWN with JERRY WHITE - Stereo - 12 tracks - includes Runnin' Wild, 12th Street Rag, Flight of the Bumblebee, Snowflakes, Margie, Mame, Hello My Baby, Rose of Washington Square. (See tribute in this issue of THE RAGTIMER) - available from Howard D. White, 500 Buttermere Avenue, Interlaken, N. J. 07712, U. S. A. (Price $5. 00 postpaid U. S. A. & Canada - $6. 00 elsewhere)

Books - Plenum Publishing Corporation advises that its DA CAPPO PRESS, publishers of THE ROOTS OF JAZZ series, is now in a position to supply 2 new reprints in paperback, "JAZZ" by Nat Hentoff and Albert J. McCarthy and the third edition by Winthrop Sargeant, "JAZZ, HOT and HYBRID. For more particulars write to above at 227 West 17th Street, New York, N. Y. 10011 or buy at your favourite bookstore.

Book - STORYVILLE, NEW ORLEANS being an authentic, illustrated account of the notorious red-light district by AL ROSE. Contains 200 photos, maps, newspaper clippings and a lively story. Available from The University of Alabama Press, Drawer 2877, University, Alabama, 35486.

Organization - MAPLE LEAF CLUB - For membership particulars write to the club at 5560 West 62nd Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90056, U. S. A. Our own society interests are in common with those of Maple Leaf Club, namely

that of being "dedicated to the preservation of Classic Ragtime". Dick Zimmerman and David Bourne edit their fine bi-monthly magazine titled "RAG TIMES".

LP Records - BIX BEIDERBECKE MEMORIAL JAZZ BAND. Billy Barnes, trumpet; Skip Strong, trombone; Joe Ashworth, clarinet and soprano saxophone; John Schober, alto saxophone; Tex Wyndham, piano; John Gill, banjo; Bill Tagert, tuba; Bill Donahoe, washboard; Jay Duke, drums. Davenport Blues, Louisiana: From Monday On; seven more. AUDEX 103, (U. S. price $6. 50) (Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Band, 171 Summit Avenue, Upper Montclair, N. J. 07043).

SOUTHAMPTON DIXIE, RACING, AND CLAMBAKE SOCIETY JAZZ BAND: Come On and Stomp. Billy Barnes, trumpet; Roy Rubinstein, trombone; Joe Ashworth, clarinet; Tex Wyndham, piano; Connie Worden, banjo; Barry Bockus, bass; Bill Donahoe, washboard; John Gill, drums. The Chant; Buddy's Habits; Panama; six more. FAT CAT'S JAZZ 142, (U. S. price $5. 98) (Fat Cat Records, Box 458, Manassas, Va. 22110).

Both records were given favourable reviews by John S. Wilson in the December 1974 issue of High Fidelity Magazine.

Book - The Art of Ragtime by William J. Schafer and Johannes Riedel - (cloth bound, 250 pages) deals with "Form and Meaning of an Original Black American Art". Published by Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, U. S. A. 70803 ($10. 00 in U. S.)

LP Record - AMERICAN BEAUTY: 12 Ragtime Classics played by BRIAN DYKSTRA may be obtained by writing to Brian Dykstra, Department of Music, The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio, U. S. A. 44691. (U. S. price postpaid is $5. 00.) - See Tex Wyndham review of September/October 1974.

LP Record - THE NEW SUNSHINE JAZZ BAND has a new record OLD RAGS FDL1-0549. Tony Hagert is leader, available from J. Donald Rouse, 5010 - 11th St. Arlington, Virginia 22205, U. S. A. (Price $6. 00 in U. S.)

Piano Roll - 'Member Harvey Roehl brought to the Bash last year the manuscript of "The Vestal Press Rag", a thickly-scored work in the classic ragtime tradition that combines some unusual features with touches reminiscent of Joseph Lamb. Harvey can now supply a piano roll of this tune, played by its composer Jonathan Jensen, for $3. 50 postpaid in the U. S. , $4. 50 elsewhere. Piano roll buffs should contact Harvey at P. O. Box 97, 3533 Stratford Drive, Vestal, New York 13850. '

LP Record - Finger-bustin' Ragtime - Dave Jasen - Blue Goose 3001 - 54 King Street, New York, N. Y. 10014 (U. S. price postpaid $5. 95). Dave plays 16 rags including some of his own.

SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN - at The Prince Hotel, Toronto, Cor. York Mills & Don Mills Roads, in the Royal Box Lounge, evenings from Monday to Saturday.

STEEN CHRISTENSEN - at the Mechanical Music Museum (MMM), Vesterbrogade 150, Copenhagen (Denmark), every 2nd & 4th Wednesday each month.

BOB DURST - (RAJAH OF RAGTIME) plays ragtime piano on the Holiday Inn circuit thru the middle U. S.

DON EWELL - at the Life Lounge 3233 N. Ocean Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with Andy Bartha and the Deep South Dixieland Jazz Band.

PETER FAHRENHOLTZ - plays solo ragtime piano and with bands - regularly at Jacob's Bar BQ, Arhus and at Stenkaelderen, Arhus (Hjortshoj, Denmark)

"GASLIGHT" GALE FOEHNER - at Rochester, N. Y. - Regularly performing ragtime and sing-a-longs with slides at concerts and private party engagements.

DOUG FRASER - Entertainer, Singer, Banjo with Heartaches Razz Band, Vancouver, B. C. Does travelling one-nighters.

JIM HESSION - at the Polynesian Hotel (Tambu Lounge), Disney World, Orlando, Florida - six nights a week.

JIM KAPLAN - at the Pizza-Stein, 1428 W. Galena Ave., Freeport, Illinois on Tuesday, Friday and Sundays.

JOHN MADDOX - at Cherry Creek Inn, Denver, Colorado May 12 to June 28 and from August 4 to September 27.

KEN MAYHERCY - (RAGTIME $ BILL) Plays regularly at the Ramada Inns at Casper and Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

BOB MILNE - at The Sundog on Michigan Ave. in Dearborn, Michigan, plays Classical Ragtime and sometimes his own compositions.

MIKE MONTGOMERY - at The Dakota Inn, Rathskeller, Detroit, Michigan, Friday nights.

MAX MORATH - on the road with his new show "The Ragtime Years".

DR. ELI NEWBERGER - and The New Black Eagle Jazz Band at the Stickey Wicket Pub, West Main Street, Hopkinton, Mass., Thursday 8:00 p. m. to 12:00 p. m. (Pianist is Bob Pilsbury.)

TOM NOEL - on the road with his living portrayal show "Mark Twain at Home". Tom is in the cast of a new Tennessee Williams play, THE RED DEVIL BATTERY SIGN.

CHARLIE RASCH - with SISTER KATE, at the Cow Palace, Bancroft Road about 8 miles west of Toledo, Ohio, Fridays and Saturdays 9:00 p. m. on.

TOM SCHMUTZLER - and the Hardware City Temperance and ragtime Society, at Shakey's Pizza Parlor, Vernon, Conn. - Fridays and Saturdays.

BOB SEELEY - at Old Mill Restaurant, 5838 Dixie Highway, Waterford, Michigan (U. S. 10) Monday thru Saturday nights at 8:00 p. m.

DAN SUMMERS - and the New Charleston Chasers (with the ODJB sound), at Speak Steak House, Whirlpool St. at Cleveland Avenue, Niagara Falls, N. Y., Saturday nights and some Friday nights.

TREBOR TICHENOR - on The Goldenrod Showboat, at St. Louis, Missouri. Does weekly radio show on KWMU - FM 90. 7 called "RAGOPHILE with Trebor Tichenor".

TERRY WALDO - at Engine House #5, German Village, Columbus, Ohio, Wednesday and Thursday 9:00 p. m. to 12:00 p. m. (when not on the road).

TEX WYNDHAM - and The Red Lion Jazz Band, appearing regularly, at The Surrey Restaurant, 1101 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, Delaware.

BILL ZINN - and Zinn's Ragtime String Quartet doing Concerts and College dates in the New York area.

PERFORMERS: Please keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear in this column.

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He's A Rag Picker

by

Irving Berlin

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